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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1753
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001314

DEPT FOR AF/SPG SHORTLEY/SMALL, A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON, IO/PHO
NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM PINS FAID KDEM UN SU
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT OF SOUTHERN SUDAN REQUESTS UN ELECTIONS
ASSISTANCE

REF: KHARTOUM 1247

¶1. (SBU) Acting on direct orders from Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) President Salva Kiir Mayardit, Vice President Riek Machar formally requested elections assistance from the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) SRSG Qazi on August 16. This request allows UNMIS and UNDP to begin expedited delivery of technical and strategic elections support to government institutions and entities across Sudan's South, in accordance with UNSCR 159, and in advance of a formal request by Sudan's Government of National Unity (GNU). Machar's move sidesteps continued NCP/SPLM wrangling over composition of the National Elections Commission (NEC). Although Presidents Bashir and Kiir agreed on Abel Alier and Idris Abdullah as NEC chair and vice chair respectively (reftel), the parties remain divided over who should fill the remaining seven seats, delaying the establishment of Sudan's elections-policy arbiter.

¶2. (SBU) The GOSS' request follows nearly one year of sustained pressure by Juba's diplomatic corps to focus GOSS attention on elections. The USG co-chaired Southern Sudan Elections Donor Group (SSEDG) commissioned UNOPS in September 2007 to carry out a multi-sectoral "gap analysis" assessment to identify possible impediments to elections in the South. The SSEDG successfully pushed for the creation of an elections taskforce within the Ministry of Presidential Affairs, and with direct assistance from ConGen Juba, has worked to speed the SPLA's and Southern Sudan Police Services understanding of South-specific elections security challenges. By April 2008, the SSEDG, with the assistance of USAID-partner NDI, had given two separate briefings to broad-based civil society groups in the former garrison towns of Wau and Malakal to enhance elections awareness and build networks between otherwise disparate grassroots organizations. The June Juba-based meeting hosted over 100 local NGOs, and set the stage for the creation, with SSEDG support, of an independent civic education forum that links elections-minded organizations in the South's Equatoria, Bahr el Ghazal, and Upper Nile regions.

¶3. (SBU) Despite UN-specific language on Sudanese elections in UNSCR 1590, the absence of a functioning NEC had thus far prevented UNMIS from securing funding and political support from UN Headquarters in New York for its elections programming. UNMIS Elections Chief Ray Kennedy and UNMIS-Juba Resident Coordinator David Gressly repeatedly have noted to ConGen Juba staff the UN's New York-based bureaucracy's skepticism of Bashir's commitment to elections. According to Kennedy, the absence of a NEC only intensifies that view -- deepening bureaucratic resistance to Qazi's and Kennedy's requests for UN "anticipatory action on elections" in advance of any formal request by the GNU.

¶4. (SBU) Unaware of Machar's August 16 request, Kennedy regaled the Juba-based diplomatic corps on August 28 with news of a bureaucratic breakthrough: UN Department of Legal Affairs had ruled that, given dual competencies awarded to Khartoum and Juba by the Comprehensive

Peace Agreement (CPA) and the language in the existing UNSCR, UNMIS was authorized to act on a unilateral GOSS request. That same day, VP Machar queried Acting UNMIS/Juba Civil Affairs Chief Diane De Guzman about New York's response to his letter, bringing to UNMIS/Juba's attention for the first time both the existence of a formal GOSS request and the realization that UNMIS/Khartoum had misplaced it. De Guzman has since confirmed that UNMIS Elections Chief Ray Kennedy now has a second copy of Machar's request and is forwarding it to New York for immediate action.

¶ 15. (SBU) UNMIS/Juba Civil Affairs staff and Kennedy believe the GOSS request to UNMIS will strengthen UN agency support for SSEDG-generated initiatives in the South. Aside from the UNOPS assessment, UN participation in previous SSEDG initiatives was wholly dependent upon personal relationships within the Juba diplomatic corps and the personal (occasionally un-sanctioned) efforts of UNMIS/Juba's David Gressly. (COMMENT: More significantly, New York's endorsement of unilateral UNMIS elections support to the GOSS ahead of a GNU request may improve the occasionally fractious relationship between UNMIS/Khartoum and UNMIS/Juba. UNMIS/Juba staff, including Gressly, routinely complain to ConGen staff that their initiatives are undervalued and undermined by a UN bureaucracy "overly focused on Khartoum." END COMMENT.)

¶ 16. (SBU) COMMENT: The GOSS's request also represents a shift in the SPLM's political elections calculus, and Juba's growing recognition of its responsibility for free and fair elections in the South - despite the formal oversight responsibilities of the National Elections Commission. Unlike their compatriots in the North, including those in Darfur, two generations of Southerners have never participated in elections. With a UNFPA-estimated literacy rate of

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only 37% (male) and 12% (female) for the South, and region-specific security challenges that already are proving taxing for the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) and Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), South-specific electoral challenges are numerous. Minister for Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng previously eschewed the possibility of Juba's unilateral movement on elections in discussions with ConGen Juba PolOff, believing it would provoke NCP ire toward the SPLM, and increasingly paint the party as "overly focused on secession" -- draining votes away from the SPLM in the North. While a valid risk, UNMIS personnel have repeatedly stressed that the GOSS must enhance its capacity to overcome region-specific challenges imposed by the North/South civil war if it is to deliver elections in the South. It appears the GOSS is beginning to agree with them.

ASQUINO